

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 3554

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PBOR, GR, TU
SUBJECT: TURKISH ASSURANCES TO GREECE

REF: ANKARA 3274

1. ANKARA'S PROPOSAL OF RECOMMENDING TO PRIME MINISTER
ECEVIT THAT HE GIVE THE GREEK GOVERNMENT STRONG, PUBLIC ASSURANCES
THAT TURKEY HAS NOT EXPANSIONIST AIRMS IN THE AEGEAN HAS
CONSIDERABLE MERIT FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT. SUBJECT TO THE
DEPARTMENT'S CONCURRENCE, WE HEARTILY ENCOURAGE EMBASSY ANKARA'S
UNDERTAKING THIS INITIATIVE AND HOPE THAT ECEVIT WILL BE
RESPONSIVE.

2. A PRONOUNCEMENT OF THIS SORT BY ECEVIT WOULD, AS ANKARA
CORRECTLY NTES, BE A SHIFT FROM PUBLIC CLAIMS BY VARIOUS
TURKISH LEADERS IN RECENT YEARS. (RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOK BY
FORMER OPPOSITION LEADER GEORGE MAVROS NOW CIRCULATING IN
GREECE CONTAINS A CHRONICLE OF COMMENTARY ON THE AEGEAN BY
PROMINENT TURKISH FIGURES CONSIDERED PROVOCATIVE BY THE GREEKS.
HOWEVER, IN AND OF ITSELF, A LONE STATEMENT BY ECEVIT
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WOULD ACCOMPLISH LITTLE AND PROBABLY WOULD BE JUDGED BY
MOST GREEKS AS SIMPLY A PUBLICITY STUNT AIMED AT FACILITATING
THE LIFTING OF THE EMBARGO.

3. THUS, TO GAIN ANY ACCEPTANCE HERE THE TERRAIN WOULD HAVE TO
BE CAREFULLY PREPARED. IT APPEARS ESSENTIAL TO US THAT THE GOG
BE PRIVATELY INFORMED IN ADVANCE, PREFERABLY BY THE TURKS

THEMSELVES (BUT PERHAPS IN TANDEM WITH THE USG AND SELECTED MEMBERS OF THE EC). THIS COULD BE DONE EITHER IN ATHENS OR ANKARA, OR IN BOTH. SHOULD THE TURKISH PRESENTATION BE SUFFICIENTLY CONVINCING -- AND THIS IS THE CRITICAL FACTOR -- THE GREEKS MIGHT BE PERSUADED TO RESCHEDULE THE POSTPONED MEETING OF MFA SECRETARIES GENERAL, WHICH COULD THEN BECOME THE VENUE FOR A PRELIMINARY PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE TURKISH SIDE. MOREOVER, THIS SCENARIO WOULD GIVE THE GOG TIME TO INFLUENCE THE DOMESTIC MEDIA AND TO IMPROVE TO SOME DEGREE PUBLIC ATTITUDES. THE MOMENTUM COULD THEN BE SUSTAINED AND REINFORCED AT A HIGHER LEVEL IN WASHINGTON WHEN CARAMANLIS AND ECEVIT ATTEND THE NATO SUMMIT, ALTHOUGH A BILATERAL MEETING WOULD SEEM BEST FOR DEALING WITH THIS INITIATIVE. IN ANY CASE, THE LEAST EFFECTIVE PLATFORM WOULD BE FOR ECEVIT TO RESPOND OUT OF THE BLUE TO A PLANTED JOURNALIST'S QUESTION. THIS WOULD CERTAINLY CREATE A SHORT-TERM SENSATION BUT WOULD HAVE LITTLE CHANCE OF BEING SERIOUSLY TAKEN BY THE GREEKS.

4. AS TO THE CONTENTS OF THE STATEMENT ITSELF, OBVIOUSLY THE MORE CATEGORIC THE TURKISH DISAVOWAL OF EXPANSIONIST AIMS THE BETTER FROM THE GREEK POINT OF VIEW. IN THE PAST, PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS PROPOSED A PACT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES WHICH WOULD BAN THE USE OF FORCE. PERHAPS THIS PROPOSAL COULD BE A POINT OF DEPARTURE. ASSUMING THE TURKS WOULD WANT SOME REFERENCES TO THEIR OWN SECURITY NEEDS IN THE AEGEAN AREA -- AND THE GREEKS HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED PUBLICLY THAT TURKEY HAS RIGHTS

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IN THE AEGEAN -- THE STATEMENT SHOULD, NEVERTHELESS, UNDERLINE TURKEY'S ENDORSEMENT OF PAST TREATIES AND ARRANGEMENTS GOVERNING THE AEGEAN. IT SHOULD CONTAIN AN UNEQUIVOCAL REJECTION OF ANY TERRITORIAL CLAIMS BY TURKEY OVER THE GREEK ISLANDS. IDEALLY IT SHOULD ALSO INDICATE TURKEY'S WILLINGNESS TO REAFFIRM ITS RESPECT FOR THE CURRENT STATUS OF SOVEREIGNTY IN THE AEGEAN THROUGH A JOINT DECLARATION BY BOTH COUNTRIES LEADERS.

5. AS EMBASSY ANKARA HAS OBSERVED, THE DEEPLY ENGRAINED SUSPICION BETWEEN GREEKS AND TURKS WILL NOT BE EASILY OVERCOME, BUT IT CAN BE MANAGED AT ATATURK AND VENIZELOS DEMONSTRATED. BUT WORDS AND DECLARATIONS ALONE WILL NOT SUFFICE -- THE GREEKS AT THIS POINT ARE LOOKING FOR CONCRETE ACTS BY ECEVIT TO BACK UP HIS RECENT EXPRESSIONS OF DESIRE TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF THE AREA. FOR INSTANCE, THE GREEKS WERE GENUINELY TAKEN BACK BY THE PARSIMONY OF THE RECENT TURKISH PROPOSALS ON CYPRUS, AND THEY ARE DISQUIETED AT THE GOT'S CONTINUED REFUSAL TO ACCEPT THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE AS ONE PEACEFUL AVENUE TO A SETTLEMENT OF THE CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE. HOWEVER, IF ECEVIT IS READY TO TAKE THE NECESSARY STEPS TO CONVINCE THE GREEKS OF HIS GOOD INTENTIONS, THERE IS A CORRESPONDING

CHANCE THAT THE GREEKS WOULD MORE EASILY ACCEPT THE IDEA OF LIFTING THE ARMS EMBARGE. INDEED IF THE GOG WERE TO PERCEIVE A GENERALLY MORE FORTHCOMING ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF THE TURKS, IT MIGHT JUST BE WILLING TO RISK TAKING A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN PUSHING THE GREEK CYPRIOTS TOWARD A SOLUTION.

6. IN SUM, WE BELIEVE ANKARA'S SUGGESTION IS WELL WORTH PURSUING. THE PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF GREEK-TURKISH DISPUTES IS CRITICAL TO OUR OWN INTERESTS IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD. A STRONG DECLARATION BY ECEVIT ON THE AEGEAN, BACKED BY TANGIBLE ACTS, WOULD BE AN IMPORTANT STEP FORWARD IN RESTORING CONFIDENCE BETWEEN OUR TWO FEUDING ALLIES IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD.
MCCLOSKEY

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